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Relationship between school, family and environment, according to school principals' views

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The aim of the study is to identify any possible deficiencies and disruptions that may be in the way of establishing a healthy cooperation between school, family and environment. It is a mixed research design study. Data were collected by scanning model and document analysis methods. Survey was used in the scanning model. The opinion of the N=50 school principals working in Rize Province of Turkey and the data obtained from these were analyzed using SPSS statistical program. Based on the results, in the process of establishing cooperation between school, family and environment the most influential element is school. The teacher who is part of the human resources of the school was the most important sub-element of this process followed by the school principal and the administrative staff. In the continuation of the activity ranking in the process of establishing cooperation between school, family and environment, parent-teachers association, Ministry of Education, parents and lastly the NGO take place. It is recommended to carry out model development and implementation studies, including studies and policy documents that will contribute to the elimination of this problem and to solve the deficiencies and problems within the system integrity.

Key words: Deficiencies and problems, family and environment participation school, school principal's opinions.

INTRODUCTION

The first thing that comes to mind when a student is mentioned is the existence of a learning person. According to the Turkish education system, the student starts his/her student life at the age of four when he/she starts kindergarten and at the age of 18 if he/she does not go to the university and does not leave school in this process, he/she completes his/her pre-university education as a graduate from high school level. During this period, the student spends at least 10.84% of his/her

time in the school and the remaining 89.16% out of school settings. Out-of-school settings consist of the home or family environment and the environment. The school where the learner spends 10% of his/her time is considered as 'a social organization' by Furman and Shields (2005: 133) and Bursalıoglu (2000: 69). This social organization is expected to provide healthy, effective and functional environments as well as the whole system and its components. In the school, a

unique organizational climate and organizational culture occur (Keleş, 2006: 21). Helvacı and Aydoğan (2011: 41) explain that there are four elements of an effective school. These are; education and teaching process, school and environment relationship, school climate or culture and school, family and parent relationship. The elements of an effective school system are students, school's human resources, family and environment. The student is at the center of this system. The school's human resources consist of; school principal, administrative staff, teachers and other employees. The family is consisted of mother-father, other family members or the student's guardian. The environment is the people and organizations around both the school and the student. It is essential to establish a good relationship between family, community and school` (Akkök, 2003), that is to say that it is imperative to have established good relationship between these parties. Looking at some of the outcomes of academic studies explained in this context `` the more parents participate in their students' learning and the school environment, the greater the success of students (Henderson and Berla, 1994). This is not only limited to academic achievement. The student's self-esteem, attendance and social behavior are strengthened (Lemmer, 2007: 219). It is also possible to explain this as discussed in Pehlivan (1997)'s study. It contributes to students' participation, motivation and self-confidence and to develop positive attitudes towards school and teachers. In summary, a healthy school environment produces morale, motivation, productivity and consequently increased performance" (Ayık and Ada, 2009). It benefits the students, families, the school, the teacher and society (Akkök, 2003).

There are many models that explain a possible healthy relationship between school, family and society. In the explanation of these models, it is seen that the school system focuses on different elements and sub-components. According to this information, Aydin (2005)'s study has seven, Epstein (1995)'s and Taymaz (2003)'s models have six elements. In the works of Bursalıoglu (2000) and Yiğit and Bayraktar (2006) four elements are included. As discussed in these studies, one of the most important elements of a healthy school system is school management. A school; is managed by a principal. A school principal has many duties and responsibilities. Among the duties of a school principal are to provide the learning individual with the opportunity to learn and teach in a systematic structure, to regulate relations with society, to lead the education and management fields (Gündüz and Balyer, 2013; Şaban, 2011; Wohlstetter and Mohrman, 1996; Helvacı and Aydogan, 2011). Like all systems and their elements that change, develop or transform the tasks or roles expected from school, school principals also differ over time. Today's new management approaches address some elements that stand out when determining the effectiveness and functionality of the school principal. In Balyer (2012)'s these elements are listed as:

accountability, self-governing school, competitiveness, curriculum and assessment methods. Emphasizing that the roles of school principals are more flexible and diverse, Mulford (2003) stated that school principals should be individuals who are successful in performance, management, reorganization of teaching and related responsibilities such as the power they possess, student performance-oriented assessment, complex social environment, multipolar society, change of teachers' roles. Another matter is that a school principal is the facilitator in the relationship between school, family and environment (Hall, 2005, p.12). The principle should be involved in relationships with parents, decision-making, school budget and finance matters (Sahid, 2004). Besides all of these, the school principal, contributes to the effective and efficient learning environment and the positive view of the family to education. The principal also contributes to the formation of self-esteem in the student through motivation, interest and integration in the environment and contributes to the protection of the student from negative effects, if there are any (Uluğ, 1990; Beler, 1993; Burns, 1993; Gül, 1998; Özçınar, 2003).

Rationale and importance of the research

Many studies have been carried out to establish a healthy relationship between school, family and environment. Apart from these studies, as reported in Badavan and Özbaş (2009) legal and administrative arrangements are made as well. However, despite all of these studies no healthy relationship between school, family and society has been established. In fact, how to establish and develop (Çalık, 2007: 123) this healthy relationship is not mentioned. This situation necessitates the explanation of how to develop healthy relationships between the school, the family and the community. Therefore, the opinions collected from school principals are considered important in terms of compiling the above-mentioned problems and the opinions that may be the subject of the solution of these problems. Thus, the school principal is in an important position in the relationship established between the school, family and society. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are many studies related to this subject with similar scope and content. In this study, any deficiencies, disruptions and areas of improvement related to the possible healthy environment between school, family and environment will be described with the opinions of the school principals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study the mixed research design method was used. In the data collection process, literature review and content analysis methods were used. Relevant field literature studies and questionnaire were used. Data collected through the questionnaire

were analyzed by SPSS statistical package program.

Purpose of the research

The aim of the study is to identify any possible deficiencies and disruptions that may be in the way of establishing a healthy cooperation between school, family and environment. For this purpose, according to the schools principal's opinions the study tried to answer the question: If there are any, what are the deficiencies and disruptions that may be in the way of establishing a healthy cooperation between school, family and environment?

Population and sample

In the data collection process, the opinions of the school principal were used with the screening model of this study. The population of the research was Rize Province which according to the statistics of the Ministry of Education (2019: 20, 27), has 171 primary school level and 189 secondary school level educational establishments. The samples of this study are the school principals working in 50 schools which are considered sufficient to represent the population among the schools in this province.

Data collection tools

The data suitable for the research purpose were obtained by document analysis and scanning model method. As reported in Büyüköztürk et al. (2012)'s study which used the scanning model was conducted to determine the participants' views related to the scope or characteristics of their interests, skills, abilities, attitudes, etc. In other words, factual opinions, attitudes and behaviors (Aziz, 2015: 103) were determined. The study was carried out with 50 sample groups from Rize province, in accordance with the description of the following scanning method; ``in a population considered to consist of many elements, in order to make a general judgment about it, group of samples or a sample is taken from the whole population or from sample of it `` (Karasar, 2005 : 79). The people whose opinions were consulted are the school principals. The aim of the study is to explain the relationship between school, family and society in the context of educational science and learning and to provide data to the conceptual framework needed in the analysis of the data in the scanning model. The scanning model consisted of opinions collected from school principals through questionnaires. In the research the questionnaire used as a data collection tool is titled ``Family Participation Research`` and is developed by Prof. Eleanor Lemmer, a faculty member at University of South Africa. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is the introduction part. There are six open-ended questions in this part where demographic information is compiled. These questions are titled as; name, type, state or private status of the school, number of students and other. The second part that has 27 questions composed of two sub-parts named ``home and school relations`` and ``school support``. Some of these questions are multiple choice and some are open ended. The questionnaire was translated to Turkish by the researchers and was used in data compilation process. For scope and structure validity and reliability, in addition to interviews done with Lemmer, data were compiled from additional face-to-face interviews with 5 school principals. The questionnaire was delivered to school principals in the form of printed forms. The forms were collected after being filled in by the principals. When the collected questionnaires were examined, it was found that the whole sample responded to the questionnaire. The data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed with SPSS 22.0 statistical software. In this process; frequency (f),

percent distributions (%) and t-test analysis were done. Findings related to the degree of freedom (df) and level of significance (ls) were put forward and the findings, results and recommendations were obtained from this document analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the analysis of the data compiled by answering the questions for the purpose of the research, all n = 50 schools subject to the research have state school status. 54% of the schools are primary, 20% are secondary and 26% are high schools. The school principals (54%) are with 1-3 years of experience, 28% are with 4-6 years, 14% are with 7-10 years and 4% are with more than 10 years of experience as principals in these schools. 58% of the schools have up to 300, 36% have between 300-600 and 6% have more than 600 students. In order to determine the relationship between the school, family and environment, the principals were consulted on the following subjects: knowledge of the teachers and staff working in the school, in-service training activities for this purpose, if the school has a staff in charge of the relevant subject and whether the school has or does not have a policy document related to the subject.

In addition to this, communication and interaction tools and information gathering method for the healthy relationship between school, family and environment have been the subject of data collection. Also, the topics and frequency of the meetings, attitude and behavior of the parties were some other subjects of data collection. The views of the family regarding their voluntary work and participation in-school and extra-scholastic cooperation with the school were also collected. According to the opinions of the principals, it is established that 82% of the teachers and 96% of the other school staff do not have enough information about the relationship that should be established between the school staff and the family. Only 34% of schools have an in-service training program for staff. 36% do not have family representative and 36% do not have a policy document. In addition, in 28% of schools it is believed that the expected relationship between the school and the family is not qualified.

The means of communication and interaction between the school and the family are listed from most effective to least effective: telephone in 96% of the schools, meetings conducted during certain calendar periods in 68%, home visits in 56%, entertainment sport or other activities in 52%, writing status reports in 42% and conducting meetings in the area where the family is located in 6%. It was found that the report cards in the data collection tool were never used. The parties, in 46% of the schools meet sometimes and in 36% of the schools meet regularly for possible cooperation between the school and the family. For this purpose, only teachers meet with families frequently in 62% of schools and once in a period of 30%.

Table 1. Families' participation in teaching activities organized by the school in relation to school, family and environment relationship.

Activity	X (mean)
Participants in individual family-teacher meetings	2.56
Regular participants in the meetings organized at school	2.30
Regular participants in regular study meetings organized at school	2.16
Activity – Basic level writing skills	1.96
Activity-Finding information for Homework and projects	1.94
Activity – Basic level mathematical skills	1.83
The ones who control the daily homework of their children	1.81
Participants in the school governing body elections	1.80

In order to discuss the situation of students with special learning needs and behavioral problems, the parties always meet in 50% of schools and sometimes in 30%. In order to discuss the situation of successful students, the parties meet frequently in 60% of schools and sometimes in 36%. School principals spend on average 3.73 h per week to meet with the families to discuss school and family relations. According to the opinions of the school principals 28% of the schools' families gather for some voluntary services. The voluntary services provided by the families are from the largest to the smallest and proportionally as follows: 48% organize trips or take part in organized trips, 44% contribute to the students' development through sharing personal experience or making career plans, 26% read together with the students, 12% listen to students' readings, 10% check students' works and 6% contribute to students' acquisition of skills in the learning process.

One of the subjects on which school principals' opinions were collected was; the voluntary support provided by the families in cooperation between the school, family and environment. One of the subjects on which school principals' opinions were collected is; the voluntary support provided by the families in cooperation between the school, family and environment. According to 40% of school principals, the families observe the students in the playgrounds activities. In addition, in 36% of the schools, the families observe the participation of the students in the activities of the school buildings, social living spaces and laboratory. In 20% of the school's families voluntarily contribute by working in areas such as libraries and computer laboratories, 20% assist in the canteen and assist other students during lunch hours, and 8% contribute by assisting the students in studies or private lessons. Also, in order to determine the different forms of cooperation with families and their frequency, the opinions of the school principals were used. The school principals' responses were recorded with the minimum (1), medium (2) and maximum (3) points. With the analysis of these records, it was found that the families participated in the teacher and family meetings with an average of 2.56 points as shown in

Table 1. Afterwards, it was found that with an average score of 2.30 points the families participated in irregular meetings organized by the school and with an average score of 2.16 points they were invited to and that they participated in meetings during different periods of time. Family; in the cooperation between school, family and environment in addition to participating in the meetings arranged by the teachers and the school they also cooperate with the aim of contributing directly to the academic studies of the students. According to this, family support activities that support students' writing skills with 1.96 points on average, with 1.94 average points they support the students in homework assignments and finding information related to projects and with average 1.83 points they support the students with their basic mathematic skills.

One of the subjects on which school principals' opinions were collected is related to the students learning activities at home. 28% of school's families are always consulted and 64% are sometimes consulted by school on issues related to the students' homework. While 58% of the schools have a homework policy 42% do not. 46% of the schools make interaction with the parents regarding the homework assigned to the students. 40% of the school's families are informed about the students' homework assignments during the school and family meetings; in 26% of the schools written note is used (Table 2).

The issues that the principal wants to take part in the council established with the school, family and environment and their school-based ratios are as follows.40% of the school's principals want to support the family education and to take part in issues related to the academic skills expected to be acquired by children. Principals of 70% of the schools want to take part in issues related to special skills or needs, 42% want to take part in the process of supporting the conditions for students to learn at home and 64% want to take part in the issues that are subject to the active participation of the family. Principals of 80% of the schools want to take part in students' progress and the evaluations related to it, 56% want to take part in activities related to

Table 2. Participation level of the School, family and Environment Elements in the School, Family and Environment Council.

	Tenure	N	Average (M)	Group average	Standard deviation	Standard deviation of the average
School management unit	1-3	25	3.56		0.71	0.14
	4-6	14	3.57	3.61	0.76	0.20
	7-10	6	3.17		1.17	0.48
	More than 10	2	4.00		0.00	0.00
Support staff, deputy principal, clerk, janitor	1-3	25	3.48		0.71	0.14
	4-6	13	3.46	3,53	0.66	0.18
	7-10	6	3.33		0.82	0.33
	More than 10	2	3.50		0.71	0.50
Teacher	1-3	25	3.40		0.71	0.14
	4-6	14	3.21	3,46	0.80	0.25
	7-10	6	3.50		0.83	0.34
	More than 10	2	4.00		0.00	0.00
School council	1-3	25	3.16		0.99	0.20
	4-6	14	2.93	3,15	1.121	0.27
	7-10	6	2.83		1.17	0.48
	More than 10	2	4.00		0.00	0.00
Ministry of education	1-3	23	2.91		1.16	0.24
	4-6	12	2.97	2,91	1.16	0.34
	7-10	6	2.17		1.17	0.48
	More than 10	2	3.50		0.71	0.50
Parent	1-3	25	2.72		0.79	0.16
	4-6	14	2.00	2,46	0.88	0.23
	7-10	6	2.17		0.75	0.31
	More than 10	2	2.00		0.00	0.00
Non-governmental organization	1-3	23	1.78		0.99	0.21
	4-6	14	1.79	1,82	1.05	0.28
	7-10	6	1.67		0.82	0.33
	More than 10	2	2.00		0.00	0.00

determining parents' opinions about the school, 50% want to participate in decision making process and 72% want to take part in the activities related to the benefit of society. While taking the years of duty of the principals into consideration the opinions of the parties involved in school, family and environment collaborations and their participation levels in the collaborations between the school, family and environment were analyzed and obtained data is given in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, in collaboration between school, family and environment the most effective party is the school and its sub-element the school management; then, other school staff, teachers, school council, Ministry of Education, family and non-governmental organizations follow, respectively. In the collaboration between school, family and environment non-governmental organization is the least effective.

According to the school principals' opinions, the school, family and environment participation is supported by school management, 64%; 54% by deputy principal and support staff and 52% by the teacher. This shows that the process and the relationship between school, family and environment are carried out through school staff. According to the school principals' opinions, 82% of the teachers and 92% of the other staff have sufficient knowledge. In 34% of the schools on-the-job training is applied. In 36% of the schools it **is** believed that the

family representative is participating in the activities. Again in 96% of the schools' phone calls, in 68% conducting interviews during certain calendar periods; in 56% doing home visits; in 52% organizing entertainment, sport etc. activities; in 42% writing status reports; in 6% organizing meetings in the areas where the families live are other communication and interaction methods being used. 46% of the school principals meet with the families `sometimes` and 36% meet `often`. Also, school principal spends on average 3.73 h a week for an effective school-family cooperation. 28%, participate in some voluntary service at school. The 20% of the support is oriented at the school structures, social living spaces and laboratory works. In the process of striving to establish a healthy relationship between school, family and environment, the opinion of the family and the environment is "always" referred to with a rate of 28% and it is "sometimes" referred to with a rate of 64%. In the assignments given to students, direct interaction with family members is done with rate of 46%.

Apart from these findings, school council and Ministry of Education are part of the schools governing body with the rate of 44 and 36%, respectively. On the other hand, the parents have relationship with the rate of 8% and non-governmental organizations with 6%. This situation shows that the School Councils do not establish a strong and organized relationship between schools and families and that holism is not ensured (Topçu, 2013). Similarly, the importance of continuous and regular communication between school and family is emphasized in order to ensure family participation. The schools' human resources, in order to ensure participation of the family, may interact and contact them via phone or materials such as letter, bulletin board, school-parent handbook, poster-brochure (Hohmann and Weikart, 2000). It is seen that there is not enough contribution to the formation of a process that ``contributes towards the development of the collaboration between the teacher and the school; students' learning activities at home; student's increased learning success; contributes towards the parents' awareness of teachers' workload (Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:14-16). However, it is also consistent with the following explanation ``there should be a consistency between the school and the family in the expectations of the family from the school and the goals of the school. If this consistency is not achieved, both the school will lose its effectiveness and the expectations of the family will not be realized`` (Epstein and Sheldon, 2002: 310; Aslanargun, 2007). These findings show that, there are important deficiencies and problems in the process of establishing a healthy relationship between school, family and environment. Finding a solution to these deficiencies and problems is seen as a necessity. However, it would not be a correct and fair approach to expect these deficiencies and problems to be solved solely by the school principals. Hence, it is necessary to search for solutions to existing deficiencies and problems within the system and to carry out studies to eliminate them and to take measures.

Conclusions

The schools the teachers (82%) and 96% of other staff do not have necessary knowledge related to the healthy relationship expected to be established between school, family and environment. In addition, while only in 34% of the schools there is on-the-job training oriented towards the staff, in 36% family representative takes part in activities and in 36% there is no policy document. The ways of communication and interaction between the school and the family are listed from most effective to least effective as follows: telephone in 96% of the schools, meetings conducted during certain calendar periods in 68%, home visits in 56%, entertainment sport or other activities. In addition, in 42% writing status reports and in 6% conducting meetings in the area where the family is located are ways of establishing communication and interaction. In this process, report cards found in the data collection tool were not used at all.

In 46% of the school's family and school staff meets sometimes and in 36% they meet often. 62% of the teachers meet with the families frequently and 30% meet once at the beginning of the semester. In 50% of schools there are always meetings and in 30% there are sometimes meetings to discuss the situation of students with special learning needs and behavioral problems. In 60% of the schools there are frequent meetings and in 36% there are occasional meetings to discuss the situation of the successful students. When school principals come together with families for school-family relations they spend on average 3.73 h a week.

According to the opinions of the school principals, 28% of the school's families take part in voluntary services. The voluntary services the families take part in are mostly social activities. According to this, proportionally the voluntary services provided by the families are as follows: 48% organizing trips or taking part in organized trips, 44% contributing to the student's development through sharing personal experience or making career plans, 26% listening to the students' readings, 10% checking students works and 6% is contributing to students' acquisition.

Family volunteer support includes 40% observing the activities in the student playgrounds, 36% following their participation in the activities and observing the student in the school buildings, social living spaces and in laboratories. Besides these, 20% of the schools' families voluntarily contribute by working in areas such as libraries and computer laboratories, 20% assist in the canteen and assist other students during lunch hours, and 8% contribute by assisting the students in studies or private lessons. When families are scored with the highest

3 and lowest 1, they attend individual family-teacher meetings with a maximum of 2.56 on average. Then, they attend the meetings held at the school with an average of 2.30 and regular meetings held at the school with an average of 2.13. After these three elements, it is seen that they show more interest in the subjects related to academic study. Activities that support writing skills are supported by families with an average score of 1.96, homework assignments and project information finding with 1.94 and supporting mathematics skills with an average score of 1.83 points.

28% of schools' families are always consulted and 64% are sometimes consulted by school on issues related to the student's homework assignments. While 58% of the schools have a homework assignment policy 42% do not. 46% of the schools make interaction with the parents regarding the homework assigned to the student. The relationship between the homework assignments given to the student and the family is made through direct interaction in 46% of the schools.

40% of the school principals want to take part in the subjects related to the academic skills expected to be acquired by children and to the subjects related to the support of family education. Principals of the 70% of the schools want to take part in issues related to special skills or needs, 42% want to take part in the process of supporting the students in the subjects they are to learn at home and 64% want to take part in the issues that are subject to the active participation of the family. Principals of the 82% of the schools want to take part in students' progress and the evaluations related to it, 56% want to take part in activities related to determining parents' opinions about the school, 50% want to participate in decision making mechanism process and 72% want to take part in the activities related to the benefit of society.

The research provides findings and conclusions that the most effective element of school, family and environment cooperation is the human resource of the school. According to this, the teacher is at the forefront of the school's human resources; following are the school management and administrative support staff. In the relationship between school, family and environment, after school's human resources, it was concluded that school council, Ministry of Education, parents and civil society organization were effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The most important deficiency or problem is estimated to be the fact that the process between the school, the family and the environment runs through the school and that the family and the environment are not actively involved. Finding a solution to these problems and deficiencies within the system's integrity is seen as a necessity requirement. For this reason, continuing the studies in this scope, developing and implementing models including policy documents is recommended.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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